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THE QUESTION BOX

The Wisconsin Historical Library has long maintained a bureau of historical information for the benefit of those who care to avail themselves of the service it offers. In "The Question Box" will be printed from time to time such queries, with the answers made to them, as possess sufficient general interest to render their publication worth while.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME "WISCONSIN"

Do you issue any literature on the subject of the origin of the name "Wisconsin?" This subject of names is one of great interest to me and, strange as it may seem, it is quite difficult to obtain reliable information as to the origin of our states' names.

FREDERICK W. LAWRENCE
Brooklyn, New York

Wisconsin is named for its principal river, but the origin of that name has never been satisfactorily determined. It had over twenty spellings on the early maps ranging from "Miscous" to the ordinary French form "Ouisconsin," Anglicized as "Wisconsin." An early governor of the state insisted on the form "Wiskonsan" until the present spelling was established by legal enactment.

The United States board on geographic names gives the significance as "wild, rushing river"; this is not accepted by our archeologists, however, all the more that the portion of the river first seen and named was not of that character. A member of the Society's research staff is working out a theory of the name, but is not yet prepared to publish it.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SINSINAWA

I write you today for information which is of vital interest to us at the present time. In March, 1918 among the Indian names given to ships by Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, "Sinsinawa" attracted our attention. At our request and through the courtesy of an official of the United States Shipping board, Saint Clara College was accorded the honor of naming

the sponsor for this ship. The *Sinsinawa* was intended for war service, but after the armistice the plans were changed to make it a cargo ship. The ship was built between January, 1919 and the present date and was scheduled to be launched on September 6, 1919. A member of our alumnæ was appointed sponsor and had the honor of christening the vessel at the Hog Island shipyards on the date named. All of this has brought the name "Sinsinawa" very prominently to our interest and we are now desirous of celebrating the event in a particular way. For this reason I am interested in obtaining all the information which your records may be able to afford us; below I am enumerating under separate heads the details about which I should like to have special information.

I. A complete history of the name "Sinsinawa."

1. Whether name of a chief, maiden, or what.
2. The Indian dialect to which the name belongs.
3. The meaning in the Indian language.
4. Why applied to the mound which bears the name.
5. When first used.

II. Association of the name with events in the history of the territory of Wisconsin.

III. Association of the name with events in the history of the state of Wisconsin.

1. Association of the name with events in the history of Grant County.

IV. Date of establishing the post office bearing this name.

1. Names of persons responsible for the establishing of post office.

V. Local history of interest, if there is any.

VI. Names of citizens and legislators of the territory or state of Wisconsin associated in any way with the history of the place.

VII. If there are any Indian traditions or recorded historical facts relating to the place while this section of Wisconsin was still a part of Michigan, we should be glad to have whatever your files may contain.

SISTER M. CLEMENTINE

Saint Clara College, Sinsinawa

The following report, taking up in order the several points noted in your inquiry concerning the history of Sinsinawa, has been prepared by Miss Kellogg of our research staff:

I. *Bulletin of United States Geographical Survey*, No. 197, p. 239 gives the origin as "Sinsiawe," meaning rattlesnake. It does not give the name of the tribe, but we incline to think it is a Sauk and Fox word. All the region around there was the Sauk and Fox mining ground. The mound took its name from the creek, and this name was first applied to the former by Gen. George Wallace Jones when in 1827 he leased a thousand acres containing the mound. The creek

first appears upon a map of the lead mines drawn in 1829. It is there spelled "Sinsineua." See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, XI, 400. Other spellings are "Sinsinewa," "Sinsinniwa," and "Sinsinnawa." General Jones states that the Indians accented the next to the last syllable.

II, III. During the early period of Wisconsin history Sinsinawa was known as the home of General Jones. The best authority on his career is Parish, *Life of George Wallace Jones*, Iowa Biographical Series. The Jones manuscripts belong to the Iowa Historical Society. You may secure additional information from them. The property you now possess passed directly from Jones to Father Mazzuchelli about 1844. The records of your institution must supply the local history of the place in its later years.

IV. The first post office was established in 1835 when General Jones was territorial delegate from Michigan. He was himself postmaster and his emoluments were \$1.92. In 1837 William P. Ruggles was postmaster. In 1839 no such office was reported. In 1841 Charles Swift was postmaster, receiving 76 cents, with net proceeds \$1.82. After that date there was no post office bearing the name Sinsinawa Mounds until 1857 when Thomas L. Powers was appointed postmaster and kept the place until 1865 when he was succeeded by O. S. Brady.

V, VI, VII. The region of Sinsinawa Creek is that of the earliest lead mining by the Indians that is known. See account in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, XIII, 271-92. Old Buck, the Indian who discovered the Buck lead, was living on Sinsinawa Creek in 1828. There is a local tradition that an American trader was killed at Sinsinawa during the War of 1812, probably on some branch of the creek. All of the Indians of this region were then in the British interest, and no "Long Knife," as they called the Americans, was safe if his nationality was known. This tradition may thus probably be true. In 1832 a log fort was built at General Jones's place, and there on June 29 three men working in a field without the fort were attacked by Indians and after a brief skirmish two of them were killed. The names are given differently by different authorities; some say John Thompson and James Boxley; others Lovell and Maxwell. It is possible all four were victims of the war, since one authority (*Wis. Hist. Colls.*, X, 192) says four men lost their lives at Sinsinawa during the Black Hawk War.

General Jones is the only man of prominence, so far as we know, who lived at Sinsinawa. However, he had as visitors most of the prominent men of the territory. In his autobiography, published in Parish's book, he tells of visits from Henry Dodge, the Gratiots, Jefferson Davis, and others.

OLD TRAILS AROUND EAU CLAIRE

As chairman of the National Old Trails Roads of the Eau Claire chapter of the D. A. R. I have been advised by the state chairman to ask you for help in securing information in regard to old trails in Eau Claire County or vicinity. We are in our infancy as a chapter, having been organized only a little over a year, and while we are most anxious to do our part we are sadly in need of guidance by those of greater experience.

If you can give me any information in regard to the old trails or advise me as to where I may secure such aid, I shall be very grateful.

IDA LINTON HAINER
Eau Claire

We are glad to make such suggestions as we can concerning the early trails. The exact locating of these trails is, however, such a local matter that we can only give general directions to be worked out by recourse to old settlers and local authorities.

The valley of the Chippewa is, historically considered, one of the most interesting and one of the oldest locations in Wisconsin history. The lower part was the scene during one hundred years of the great contest between the Chippewa and Sioux tribes wherein the former gradually pushed the latter back to the Mississippi. If you can secure *Minnesota Historical Collections*, V, you can read about it in the account of the Chippewa historian, William Warren. His sisters are still living near White Earth, Minnesota, and perhaps you could obtain information from them. Address Theodore H. Beaulieu, and ask him if Mrs. English or her sisters can give you any information.

The first English traveler in Wisconsin, Captain Jonathan Carver, ascended the Chippewa in 1766. He says that about thirty miles from its mouth the river branches and that between the two branches ran the great Road of War between the Chippewa and the Sioux. The boundary between the two peoples was settled at the Prairie du Chien treaty of 1825. It began half a day's march below the falls, thence to the St. Croix. It would be interesting for you to locate that boundary. The half a day's march below the falls is said